

NiSource Inc. (NI)

\$24.02 (As of 05/28/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$25.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 04/29/19)

Prior Recommendation: Underperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

3-Hold

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:B

Value: B

Growth: C

Momentum: B

Summary

In the first quarter of 2020, NiSource reported lower-than-expected results. However, its planned regulated investments will increase reliability of its natural gas and electric operations and enable it to provide efficient services to its expanding customer base. The company is focused on long-term utility infrastructure modernization program and intends to invest \$30 billion for the same. The company expects COVID-19 to lower demand from C&I group. In the past 12 months, NiSource's shares have underperformed its industry. In spite of investments to upgrade programs, aging infrastructure is likely to disrupt operations. Rising debt level is another headwind. Further, there is always an inherent risk associated with the completion of capital projects within budget.

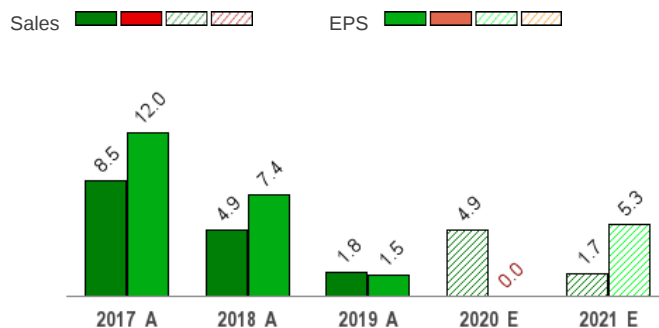
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52 Week High-Low	\$30.67 - \$19.56
20 Day Average Volume (sh)	3,460,471
Market Cap	\$9.2 B
YTD Price Change	-13.7%
Beta	0.33
Dividend / Div Yld	\$0.84 / 3.5%
Industry	Utility - Electric Power
Zacks Industry Rank	Top 20% (52 out of 254)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	-5.0%
Last Sales Surprise	-17.8%
EPS F1 Est- 4 week change	-0.8%
Expected Report Date	07/29/2020
Earnings ESP	0.0%
P/E TTM	19.1
P/E F1	18.2
PEG F1	3.1
P/S TTM	1.9

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	1,990 E	1,072 E	994 E	1,455 E	5,557 E
2020	1,606 A	1,078 E	972 E	1,461 E	5,464 E
2019	1,859 A	1,010 A	932 A	1,397 A	5,209 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	\$0.80 E	\$0.08 E	\$0.06 E	\$0.44 E	\$1.39 E
2020	\$0.76 A	\$0.07 E	\$0.03 E	\$0.42 E	\$1.32 E
2019	\$0.82 A	\$0.05 A	\$0.00 A	\$0.45 A	\$1.32 A

*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and Sales estimates, is as of 05/28/2020. The reports text is as of 05/29/2020.

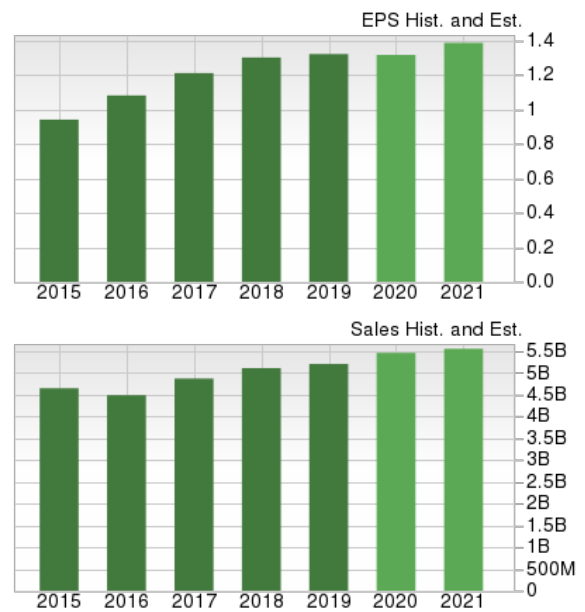
Overview

Merrillville, IN-based NiSource Inc. was founded in 1912. The company is an energy holding company and together with its subsidiaries provides natural gas, electricity and other products and services in the U.S. Its operating subsidiaries deliver energy to roughly 4 million customers in seven states — **Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky, Maryland, Indiana and Massachusetts.**

NiSource has one of the nation's largest natural gas distribution networks as measured by number of customers. NiSource's principal subsidiary is NiSource Gas Distribution Group, Inc., which is a natural gas distribution holding company. The company generates the majority of its operating income from its rate-regulated businesses.

NiSource's reportable segments are: **Gas Distribution** Operations serves around 3.5 million customers in seven states and operates about 60,000 miles of pipeline. Through its wholly-owned subsidiary NiSource Gas Distribution Group, it owns six distribution subsidiaries that provide natural gas to approximately 2.7 million residential, commercial and industrial customers in six states. In addition, through Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO), this segment distributes natural gas to around 839,000 customers in northern Indiana. **Electric** Operations segment generates, transmits and distributes electricity through its subsidiary to about 476,000 customers in 20 counties in northern Indiana. It operates two coal-fired electric generating stations, three gas-fired generating units and two hydroelectric plants. This segment has a total operating capacity of 2,847 megawatts (MW). In May 2018, NIPSCO completed the retirement of two coal-burning units at Bailly Generating Station, IN. These units had a generating capacity of approximately 460 MW.

Gas Distribution Operations, Electric Operations, and Corporate and others contributed \$3,509.7 million, \$1,698.4 million and \$0.8 million to total revenues in 2019, respectively.



Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ NiSource is working on long-term utility infrastructure modernization program. In 2019, the company invested nearly \$1.9 billion across the gas and electric utilities. NiSource will make capital investments of nearly \$1.7-\$1.8 billion in 2020. The company continues to execute on an estimated \$30-billion investment for long-term infrastructure investments. This long-term infrastructure investment includes \$20 billion for gas and \$10 billion for electricity.

NiSource has a 100% regulated utility business model. Its planned regulated investments will improve reliability and safety of its services and provide efficient electric and natural gas services to its increasing customer base. More than 75% of NiSource's capital expenditure starts to provide return in less than 18 months of investment. The company, post closure of Columbia Gas of Massachusetts assets, plans to initiate 2021 net operating earnings per share guidance and establish a 5-7% long-term growth rate for both net operating earnings per share and dividends with 2021 as the base year.

- ▲ NiSource gets regulatory approval to recoup the gas and electric investments made in its service territories. Few electric and gas rates have been approved and will be implemented in 2020, thereby driving the top line.

The company expects that impact of COVID-19 will lower commercial and industrial (C&I) sales revenues due to drop in demand from C&I group. However, the company expects due to extended stay at home orders demand from its residential customers to improve. NiSource generates 59% of its retail margin from residential group and 41% from its C&I customer group.

- ▲ Under NIPSCO's 2018 Integrated Resource plans ("IRP"), the company is seeking approval to retire 100% coal generating sources by 2028 with reliable and cleaner options at lower costs. The company aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2030 and save more than \$4 billion for customers over 30 years.

Consistent with its IRP objectives, NIPSCO will purchase power directly from Jordan Creek a 400 MW wind project, developed and constructed by NextEra Energy Resources located in Benton. NIPSCO will also purchase power directly from Roaming Bison, a 300 MW wind project located in Montgomery County. EDP Renewables and NIPSCO entered into a joint venture and ownership agreement for a 102 MW wind project in White County named the Rosewater project. These projects are anticipated to help NiSource to lower carbon footprint.

- ▲ NiSource's long-term debt amounted to \$7,818 million at the end of the first quarter of 2020, lower than \$7,856 million at the end of 2019. The company exited first quarter with \$1.3 billion available liquidity and \$2.4 billion of committed facilities, which is adequate enough to meet its debt obligations. Moreover, the company does not have significant long term debt maturities till 2022, when \$530 million debts falls due for repayment.

Its times interest earned ratio is pegged at 1.8 in the first quarter of 2020, lower than 2.3 in the fourth quarter of 2019. Even if the ratio is down sequentially it indicates that the firm will be able to meet debt obligations in the near future without any difficulties. Moreover, according to credit rating agencies like Moody's, S&P and Fitch, the company has a stable credit score.

NiSource's consistent investments to strengthen its existing infrastructure, higher earnings from residential customers and focus on clean energy are going to drive its performance.

Reasons To Sell:

▼ In the past 12 months, shares of NiSource have lost 12.8% compared with the industry's decline of 2.3%. The company along with their utility customers are exposed to variability in cash flows associated with natural gas purchases and volatility in natural gas prices. The company purchase natural gas for sale and delivery to retail, commercial and industrial customers. Variability in the market price of gas can impact their rates. The company tries to mitigate the gas cost variability by economically hedging.

Aging infrastructure, volatility in natural gas prices and inconsistent weather conditions might deter NiSource's growth.

▼ NiSource also faces the risk of ageing infrastructure that needs regular replacement. Despite efforts made by NiSource to properly maintain its assets through inspection, scheduled maintenance and capital investment, the old machineries can falter, resulting in unplanned outages. These are likely to have an adverse impact on operation, impacting the utility revenues and margins.

Post the Greater Lawrence incident, the company has increased safety-related spending and higher financing costs due the accident impacted its top line.

▼ NiSource is presently engaged in a number of capital projects, including environmental improvements to its electric generating stations, as well as the construction of new transmission facilities. The warmer weather during the first quarter 2020 lowered operating income of the company from the previous year level. However, there is always an inherent risk associated with the timely completion of projects and within budget too. Delay in completion increases capital costs and stretches the time limit of the company's expected benefit from these projects.

Last Earnings Report

NiSource's Earnings and Revenues Miss Estimates in Q1

NiSource delivered operating earnings of 76 cents per share in first-quarter 2020, which missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of 80 cents by 5%. Earnings fell 7.3% from the year-ago quarter's tally.

On a GAAP basis, the company reported earnings of 16 cents compared with 55 cents in the year-ago quarter.

Quarter Ending 03/2020

Report Date	May 06, 2020
Sales Surprise	-17.79%
EPS Surprise	-5.00%
Quarterly EPS	0.76
Annual EPS (TTM)	1.26

Total Revenues

NiSource generated total net revenues of \$1,631.8 million in the first quarter, which missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$1,953 million by 16.4%. Revenues declined 12.2% from \$1,858.9 million reported in the year-ago quarter.

Highlights of the Release

Total operating expenses in the quarter under review fell 14.1% year over year to \$1,169.1 million.

Total interest expenses in the reported quarter declined 2.8% from the prior-year quarter's figure to \$92.9 million.

The first quarter financial results of the company were minimally affected by COVID-19. However, it has lowered 2020 CapEx by \$100 million.

Financial Update

NiSource's cash and cash equivalents as of Mar 31, 2020 were \$203.8 million, up from \$139.3 million as of Dec 31, 2019.

Long-term debts (excluding amounts due within a year) as of Mar 31 were \$7,817.9 million compared with \$ 7,856.2 million as of Dec 31, 2019.

Net cash provided from operating activities in the first quarter of 2020 was \$369.9 million compared with \$399.1 million activities in the first quarter of 2019.

Recent News

NiSource's Unit Files for Rate Hike to Maryland PSC – May 15, 2020

NiSource announced that its unit — Columbia Gas of Maryland, Inc. — has filed for a rate hike with the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC), requesting an annual revenue increase of \$6.5 million.

If the new rate is approved by the commission without any alteration, it will increase the average total bill by 15.17% to \$89.43 from \$77.65 for a residential customer who purchases 70 therms of gas per month. As hike proceedings generally take around seven months to complete, the company expects these proposed rates to be effective from December 2020.

Valuation

NiSource shares are down 13.7% in the year to date period and 12.8% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Utility sector are down 12.9% and 14.8% in the year to date period, respectively. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and sector are down 2.3% and 17.7%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index is down nearly 5.7% in the year to date period and up 8.6% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 17.88X forward 12-month earnings, which compares to 12.97X for the Zacks sub-industry, 12.28X for the Zacks sector and 22.06X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 26.51X and as low as 9.23X, with a 5-year median of 20.03X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line the market. Our \$25 price target reflects 18.65X forward 12-month earnings.

The table below shows summary valuation data for NI

Valuation Multiples - NI					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	17.88	12.97	12.28	22.06
	5-Year High	26.51	15.53	15.32	22.06
	5-Year Low	9.23	11.12	11.4	15.23
	5-Year Median	20.03	13.23	13.78	17.49
P/S F12M	Current	1.67	2.07	2.62	3.42
	5-Year High	2.28	2.45	3.29	3.44
	5-Year Low	0.79	1.54	1.75	2.53
	5-Year Median	1.72	1.88	2.04	3.01
P/B TTM	Current	1.89	1.76	3.52	4.15
	5-Year High	2.26	1.94	4.05	4.56
	5-Year Low	0.69	1.21	2.01	2.83
	5-Year Median	1.96	1.57	2.61	3.65

As of 05/28/2020

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Top 20% (52 out of 254)



Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Ameren Corporation (AEE)	Neutral	3
Avangrid, Inc. (AGR)	Neutral	2
CMS Energy Corporation (CMS)	Neutral	3
CenterPoint Energy, Inc. (CNP)	Neutral	3
DTE Energy Company (DTE)	Neutral	3
Alliant Energy Corporation (LNT)	Neutral	3
Pacific GasElectric Co. (PCG)	Neutral	3
UGI Corporation (UGI)	Neutral	3

Industry Comparison Industry: Utility - Electric Power				Industry Peers		
	NI	X Industry	S&P 500	AEE	LNT	PCG
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	3	-	-	3	3	3
VGM Score	B	-	-	C	B	A
Market Cap	9.19 B	8.59 B	21.49 B	18.26 B	12.19 B	6.19 B
# of Analysts	4	3	14	4	2	2
Dividend Yield	3.50%	3.26%	1.98%	2.68%	3.11%	0.00%
Value Score	B	-	-	C	D	A
Cash/Price	0.02	0.07	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.32
EV/EBITDA	10.97	9.73	12.50	11.05	12.31	-0.86
PEG Ratio	3.03	3.59	2.87	3.16	3.66	1.15
Price/Book (P/B)	1.89	1.62	2.95	2.22	2.22	1.07
Price/Cash Flow (P/CF)	7.35	8.09	11.81	9.44	10.39	1.16
P/E (F1)	17.99	18.43	21.33	21.46	20.27	2.89
Price/Sales (P/S)	1.86	1.94	2.28	3.15	3.41	0.36
Earnings Yield	5.50%	5.37%	4.50%	4.65%	4.93%	34.50%
Debt/Equity	1.61	1.06	0.76	1.14	1.06	0.29
Cash Flow (\$/share)	3.27	4.15	6.96	7.84	4.70	10.06
Growth Score	C	-	-	C	B	C
Hist. EPS Growth (3-5 yrs)	0.21%	5.04%	10.87%	7.69%	7.03%	5.04%
Proj. EPS Growth (F1/F0)	-0.38%	0.71%	-10.48%	2.84%	4.33%	2.67%
Curr. Cash Flow Growth	14.00%	4.20%	5.39%	2.50%	10.43%	3.97%
Hist. Cash Flow Growth (3-5 yrs)	3.26%	5.54%	8.55%	6.59%	6.17%	5.38%
Current Ratio	0.77	0.86	1.29	0.62	0.55	1.28
Debt/Capital	57.66%	50.99%	44.54%	53.27%	50.57%	22.32%
Net Margin	4.85%	10.48%	10.59%	13.51%	17.12%	-42.53%
Return on Equity	9.54%	9.54%	16.26%	9.62%	12.03%	27.51%
Sales/Assets	0.22	0.22	0.55	0.20	0.22	0.20
Proj. Sales Growth (F1/F0)	5.12%	0.00%	-2.53%	3.02%	0.00%	2.02%
Momentum Score	B	-	-	B	B	A
Daily Price Chg	3.00%	1.02%	-0.65%	4.86%	3.23%	6.86%
1 Week Price Chg	3.22%	3.54%	4.99%	1.54%	0.94%	3.27%
4 Week Price Chg	-4.34%	1.64%	4.28%	1.64%	0.64%	9.77%
12 Week Price Chg	-18.93%	-14.86%	-3.05%	-14.07%	-14.86%	-22.55%
52 Week Price Chg	-12.81%	-9.49%	0.01%	1.40%	4.20%	-34.31%
20 Day Average Volume	3,460,471	447,449	2,425,602	2,048,367	1,332,062	9,462,981
(F1) EPS Est 1 week change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
(F1) EPS Est 4 week change	-0.75%	-0.07%	-1.70%	-0.07%	-0.82%	0.00%
(F1) EPS Est 12 week change	-2.41%	-2.99%	-16.00%	-1.01%	-1.23%	-1.59%
(Q1) EPS Est Mthly Chg	0.00%	-0.40%	-3.25%	0.00%	NA	0.00%

Zacks Stock Rating System

We offer two rating systems that take into account investors' holding horizons: Zacks Rank and Zacks Recommendation. Each provides valuable insights into the future profitability of the stock and can be used separately or in combination with each other depending on your investment style.

Zacks Recommendation

The Zacks Recommendation aims to predict performance over the next 6 to 12 months. The foundation for the quantitatively determined Zacks Recommendation is trends in the company's estimate revisions and earnings outlook. The Zacks Recommendation is broken down into 3 Levels; Outperform, Neutral and Underperform. Unlike many Wall Street firms, we have an excellent balance between the number of Outperform and Neutral recommendations. Our team of 70 analysts are fully versed in the benefits of earnings estimate revisions and how that is harnessed through the Zacks quantitative rating system. But we have given our analysts the ability to override the Zacks Recommendation for the 1200 stocks that they follow. The reason for the analyst over-rides is that there are often factors such as valuation, industry conditions and management effectiveness that a trained investment professional can spot better than a quantitative model.

Zacks Rank

The Zacks Rank is our short-term rating system that is most effective over the one- to three-month holding horizon. The underlying driver for the quantitatively-determined Zacks Rank is the same as the Zacks Recommendation, and reflects trends in earnings estimate revisions.

Zacks Style Scores

The Zacks Style Score is as a complementary indicator to the Zacks rating system, giving investors a way to focus on the highest rated stocks that best fit their own stock picking preferences.

Academic research has proven that stocks with the best Value, Growth and Momentum characteristics outperform the market. The Zacks Style Scores rate stocks on each of these individual styles and assigns a rating of A, B, C, D and F. We also produce the VGM Score (V for Value, G for Growth and M for Momentum), which combines the weighted average of the individual Style Scores into one score. This is perfectly suited for those who want their stocks to have the best scores across the board.

Value Score	B
Growth Score	C
Momentum Score	B
VGM Score	B

As an investor, you want to buy stocks with the highest probability of success. That means buying stocks with a Zacks Recommendation of Outperform, which also has a Style Score of an A or a B.

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